

To Members of the Larkspur City Council

Re: October 6, 2021 Agenda Item 8.3: Consideration of Permanent Widened Sidewalks from Can to Ward Street, ADA Project and Parking in Downtown

I oppose the proposed widening of the sidewalks and making permanent the parklets in Larkspur's historic downtown.

1. The Larkspur General Plan: The Plan on the city's website describes parking in the downtown as being provided in various ways but "the most obvious is extension of on street parking on Magnolia Avenue." It then adds that while it appears that downtown parking is adequate, "if there is an intensification of use, or if Downtown Larkspur becomes more attractive as a place to shop, thus increasing the demand for parking, then parking supply could become a constraining factor to economic revitalization." (Circulation, Chapter 4 p. 18) Further the General Plan Updated Committee draft of 12/16/2011 under "Magnolia Avenue Circulation" states an action program to "**explore the use of financing mechanism to improve the supply in the downtown**".

When I was on the Council, the City was always looking for ways help the downtown merchants by an increase of parking in the downtown area including parking behind Mags adjacent to the laundromat, adding parking to the right side of the Lark Theatre etc.

There has been an intensification of uses in the downtown, and if Larkspur intends to make Magnolia Ave an "attractive place to shop", the City needs to provide at least as much parking as there was before the pandemic to be complaint with its own General Plan.

2. Who Benefits from the Parklets? The parklets provided a temporary aid to restaurants during the pandemic when indoor dining was prohibited. Marin has a vaccination rate of two shots of those over the age of 12 of 98.1%. People can dine indoors with spacing and masks.

However, the large space taken up by the parklets removes parking for retail shops which sell clothing or gifts etc or merchants who provide services like banking. The removal of parking in front of Rulli's and Mag's deprives other Magnolia Ave merchants of parking and will result in the loss of income to those merchants when a driver who sees no parking space decides to take his business elsewhere. Has anyone surveyed the economic losses to the non-restaurant merchants in the downtown as a result of diminished parking for them due to the parklets? In essence, the parklets provide a benefit to one or two restaurants at the expense of the other merchants which in effect is a gift of the public's right of way and that is not sound public policy.

3. Public Safety: I drive along Magnolia in the evenings because the GGT #18 ceased operations. For a long time I have looked at the lack of a safety barrier to protect the customer's at Picco's or at Rulli's etc. If the City permits such parklets, and a car crashes into a parklet injuring or killing a patron sitting inside a parklet, will the City of Larkspur be sued for having

created a dangerous condition?

This isn't a hypothetical question. Yesterday's SF Chronicle had an article about a car crashing into a store in San Leandro, injuring ten people. (10.5.2021, Section C2) See also the total wipe out of a parklet, fortunately after hours, in San Francisco outside the Acquitaine Wine Bistro at Church and Market Streets . See the article "Cars and Parklets Don't Mix etc" Here is the link: <https://www.sfexaminer.com/news/cars-and-parklets-don't-mix-sf-searches-for-solutions-in-wake-of-accidents>.

4. The Downtown is an Historic District: Larkspur over many years of dedicated efforts by volunteers and the City Council registered Downtown Larkspur as an historic district with appropriate governmental agencies. It was no easy task to secure that designation which benefits us all.

I don't know if the parklets destroy the historic designation, but they should be no more than a temporary pandemic solution because they destroy the visual charm of our classic historic downtown.

5. Widening of the Sidewalks: I love strolling along 5th Avenue in New York or along the Champs Elysee in Paris. But those are big cities and Magnolia's ambiance is created by its narrow old street. If the ADA does not require the sidewalk widening, it should not be done because it would detract from Larkspur's cultural and historic charm.

Larry Lanctot